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EPISTLE

FROM THE

Meeting for Sufferings,

By their Order, the 17th of the Second Month,
And 1st of the Third Month, 1696.

*To such Friends in England and Wales, or
elsewhere, as are or may be concern'd in
the Favour granted by the Government
for the Ease of Friends, from the great
Oppression of Oaths.*

Dear Friends,

THE Lord our God, that Rules in the King-
doms of Men, having of late Years inclined
the Hearts of many in the Government unto a Ten-
derness towards Friends in some measure; there
hath also fallen on some Friends a Concern of Mind
to improve that Tenderness, which was in the King
and some of the Rulers, to the most Ease to Suffering
Friends that could then be obtain'd;

Of which Friends have generally now for several
Years had the Benefit by Law, in their open, free,
and unmolested Exercise in the Worship of God;
to His great Honour, to Friends great Comfort,

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and

and to the farther spreading of the Truth in this Nation : As also to the crushing the cruel and ungodly Informers, and other Persecutors :

For which great Mercy, many sincere-hearted ones have, in Humility of Soul, been thankful to God, and have been very free in their Minds publicly to acknowledge it to the several Governments, by whom this Ease hath been granted and confirmed.

And altho' the aforesaid Ease did not come forth with that Clearness, in all points, that Friends did desire, yet it hath much answered the good Ends above-mentioned. So that Friends have been since at times encouraged to endeavour for farther Ease in divers Cases ; and of late to obtain (we hope) some stop to the great Sufferings many have been under, by Imprisonments, Sequestrations, and otherwise, for refusing to Swear, in obedience to Christ's Command, &c.

In which Labour and Endeavour the Presence of the Lord hath been witnessed, and his Power felt to work on Friends behalf.

And it being now past into a Law, and Friends thereby admitted (through this Nation) to have their Solemn Declaration *in the Presence of Almighty God, the Witness of the Truth of what [we] say*, accepted instead of an Oath, in all Cases, except Serving in Juries, being Evidence in Criminal Causes, and bearing Offices of Profit in the Government.

There now remains a few things in our Minds, to signify to all Friends that may be concern'd in this matter.

And first, we intreat, that whoever of you, that are called or have occasion to make or use the said *Solemn Declaration*, or subscribe the Promise of *Fidelity to the Government*, may be truly watchful to be preserved in a weighty serious Frame of Spirit, as much as in you lies, to reach the Witness of God in all that hear you : For your keeping strictly to the
very

very Truth of what you say or declare, and speaking in the true Fear and Dread of the Lord, will much tend to convince those of the World, who are ferious, that they have from you fully as great Certainty of Truth, as from those that Swear.

And as hereunto, our Christian Profession and Duty towards God doth oblige us, to the highest degree of Care, in Testifying the Truth, so also is the Punishment on any that shall falsify, as great, both from God, and from Men; for the Punishment from God is, for *Liars to be cast into the Lake*, *Rev. 21. 8, 27.* From Men, 'tis the same Punishment that by Law is appointed for Perjur'd Persons.

It seems also needful to us to acquaint you, that it was the Sense of this Meeting, that somewhat might be done to satisfie all that may be in doubt, or that may have had it in their Minds as Matter of Question, what *Solemn Words* Friends might use, or admit of, and not vary from our known Principle, *Swear not at all.*

And in order thereto, to shew the Testimonies of Friends formerly express'd, many of which suffer'd largely on the account of *Not Swearing*; and we shall begin with our dear and worthily remembred Friend and Elder *George Fox*, who was moved of the Lord to write a Paper to *Oliver Cromwell*, wherein he did in the Presence of the Lord God declare, that [he denied] the wearing or drawing of a Carnal Sword, &c. See his *Journal*, p. 137. in Anno 1654. Afterwards being brought before the Judges of the King's Bench, he tendred them a Paper, in which was contain'd what he could say instead of the Oaths of Allegiance and Supremacy, as followeth,

' This I do in the Truth, and in the Presence of God,
' declare, That King *Charles* the Second is Lawful
' King of this Realm, and of all other his Dominions;
' and that he was brought in, and set up King over
' this Realm by the Power of God; and I have no-
' thing but Love and Good-will to him and all his

'Subjects, and desire his Prosperity and Eternal
 'Good. And I do utterly abhor and deny the Pope's
 'Power and Supremacy, and all his Superstitious
 'and Idolatrous Inventions; and do affirm, that he
 'hath no Power to absolve Sin: And I do abhor and
 'detest his Murthering of Princes, or other People,
 'by Plots or Contrivances. And likewise I do deny
 'all Plots and Contrivances, and Plotters and Con-
 'trivers against the King and his Subjects, knowing
 'them to be the Works of Darkness, and the Fruits
 'of an Evil Spirit, and against the Peace of the
 'Kingdom, and not from the Spirit of God, the
 'Fruit of which is Love. I dare not take an Oath,
 'because it is forbidden by Christ and the Apostle;
 'but if I break my Yea or Nay, then let me suffer
 'the same Penalty, as they that break their Oaths.

G. F's Journal, p. 399.

George Fox.

And *R. Farnsworth* in Court, before the Major of
Banbury; when the Oath of Abjuration was tendred,
 denied in the Presence of God all Popish Ways, &c.
Saints Testimony, page 2.

And *R. Hubberthorne*, in his Discourse with King
Charles the Second, when the King said, *But can you*
not promise as before the Lord (which is the Substance
of the Oath?) *R. Hubberthorne* replied, *Yes, what we do*
affirm, we can promise before the Lord, and take him to
our Witness in it. *R. H's Works, p. 269.*

There being an Act passing against Friends about
Anno 1662. Friends drew up Reasons, and shewed,
Whereas 'tis said in the Preamble of the Bill, that our
refusing to Swear, doth much suppress the Truth, &c.
 Concerning which, Friends reply,

'This is not a true Foundation, whereupon to
 'proceed to Enact against us; for our refusing to
 'Swear doth not suppress the Truth, because we
 'are ready and willing to discover and advance the
 'Truth on all occasions, lawfully called thereunto,
 'by faithful Testimony in Tea and Nay, calling God
 'to Record, or Averring it in his Presence, &c.

And

And in the 11th Reason of the said Paper, Friends say, 'For we are willing at all times, and upon every good occasion, to affirm or deny, in *Yea* or *Nay*, in *Nay* or *No*, and that as in the *Presence of God*, or *God is our Witness*, or *we speak the Truth in Christ*, &c. We are ready to give Testimony in all Lawful Cases, on this wise.

And in a Paper under the Hands of *Edward Burroughs*, *Francis Howgill*, and *Richard Hubbertorne*, speaking concerning Friends Innocency, 'who have always been a peaceable People under the Government, and ready to render all just Subjection thereunto, in all good things, (*God is our Witness*.)

Again, 'And can own him as our Witness in our Testimony in *Yea* and *Nay*.

See also *William Smith*, p. 125. who soon after King *Charles* came back, writes thus,

'And we can truly pronounce our Allegiance to King *Charles*, &c. now King of *England*, and can freely promise, in the *Presence of the Lord*, who is the Searcher of all Hearts, and knows we Lye not; and we can Seal it with our *Yea* or *Nay*, and Sign it with our Hands.

And *Is. Pennington* saith, 'There is liberty enough left to a Disciple to satisfy any Man concerning the Truth of a thing, by Confession, as much as by an Oath; for is it not full as weighty under the Gospel to confess the Presence of God, or that he is Witness, or that we speak the thing in his Fear, and in the feeling of his Life and Power, as it was under the Law, to Swear by his Life, by his Fear, by his Power, or the like? Is not Confessing of God by a Christian, of more weight, than the Swearing by him from a Jew or Heathen. See *Is. Pennington's* Treatise in his Collections, p. 319.

The next we shall observe, is, that faithful Labourer, *Francis Howgill*, who suffer'd near Five Years Imprisonment at *Appleby* in *Westmoreland*, even to the Death, for his Testimony against Swearing; and
in

In his Life-time wrote largely in the Defence of Friends Principles in the Case of Oaths: See his Answer to Dr. *Smallwood* (so call'd) p. 677. 'In Confession of Truth, and bearing Witness thereunto, 'as before the Lord, or in his Presence, and speaking the Truth when there is necessity, as when 'any Man's Person or Estate, or any part thereof, 'is in danger; and this we have ever owned, and 'do own, and have and are ready to testify the 'Truth before the Lord, or in his Presence, as concerning any matter, which concerns the Glory of 'God, or the Good of our Neighbour, without being pinch'd, or bound up, to a certain Form of 'Words imposed upon us; but according as necessity requires, so amply and largely as our Words 'may give Knowledge, and Understanding, and 'Light in any Matter which is to be desired: But 'this hath been denied, and hath not been received 'by this unbelieving Generation, who seeks rather 'to establish the Traditions and Customs of Men, 'than the Evangelical Doctrine of the Gospel, p. 677.

Now as to the *pinching Form of Words* imposed by the unbelieving Generation, as aforesaid, see p. 680. *Viz.*

'We have been set aside as Objects of Wrath, 'as Deluded, Erroneous, Factionous, Seditious, Contemners of Law, Obstructors of Legal Proceedings, 'except we would lay our Hand upon a Bible, and 'kiss it, and say, *I swear, and by the Contents of the 'Book, and so help me God*; or else Fined, Imprisoned for Term of Life, &c.

Again, in p. 679, 680. Reciting these Scripture Expressions, '(The Lord is Witness) or *I speak the 'Truth in Christ, or this is Truth in the Presence of God,* 'or the like; none of these will serve; but though 'he and the Rulers do say they are Oaths, yet when 'at any time we have proffered willingly to declare 'the Truth in this or that particular Cause, or make

‘ as ample Confession in Demonstration for clearing
 ‘ any Cause in debate, that hath either conduced to
 ‘ the Glory of God, or the Good and Profit of any
 ‘ particular Man in the Nation, among whom we
 ‘ converse, and not without some Attestation of
 ‘ God, or his Wisdom, or Power and Presence, yet
 ‘ it would never be received, p. 679, 680. And if
 these don’t reach to Civil or Temporal Affairs, what
 does? And yet in these Cases was he free to use those
 Words.

Neither was his Adversary the only Opposer of
 Friends, that affirmed these Religious Expressions,
 which the Apostle used, were Oaths. But *Samuel
 Fisher* also, had before that encountred the same Ar-
 guments, from *Hen. Den*, and *Jer. Ives*, a contenti-
 ous Baptist, who it seems then argued, *That God is
 my Witness, God is my Record, before God I lye not, &c.
 are Oaths*, *S. Fisher’s Writings*, p. 803, 804. And the
 drift of their so arguing then, was to urge the A-
 postle swore, to render Christ not to have forbidden
 all Swearing. But *S. Fisher* fully clears the Apostle
 from their Erroneous Charge, and indeed it was
 needful he should so do: For if it were granted, as
 some now do, that the Apostles Expressions are
 Oaths, it might greatly weaken our Testimony a-
 gainst Swearing; for it cannot be denied but the
 Apostle had the Mind of Christ, and if his Expressi-
 ons themselves are nevertheless Oaths, their Distin-
 ction between Civil and Religious Cases won’t sup-
 port him.

Page 805. *S. Fisher* resumes the Argument again;
 and says, ‘ God is my Record, God is my Witness,
 ‘ my Conscience beareth me Witness, in the Holy
 ‘ Spirit, and such like; The Quakers (*says he*) gain-
 ‘ say in solemn Cases, no more than themselves---
 ‘ who have been ever willing to express their Renun-
 ‘ ciation of the Pope, and all Foreign Power, and
 ‘ their Fidelity to the King, by any of these strong
 ‘ Asseverations, or fervent Expressions, which *Paul*
 ‘ used, p. 805. *Samuel*

Samuel Fisher mentions divers odious Reflections cast upon the Apostle, and he quotes the Opposer, who affirmed as a Swearer, *That some such Swearing as was commanded under the Law, not only Christ, but the Apostle Paul does both Practise and Enjoyn*, insisting on these words, *God is my Witness, &c.* also they charge the Apostle with exacting Oaths of others, *2 Tim. 4. 1. I charge thee before God. Thess. 5. 27. I charge you by the Lord, that this Epistle be read, &c.* with a great deal more at large.

And *S. F.* ingeniously Answers, 'Some things (tho' Swearing is none of them) *Paul* did by Permissi-
' on—but that *Paul* either Sware, or exacted Oaths
' upon others, I deny: And shews, in the Apostle's
behalf, and in the behalf of our Testimony, that the
Apostle did not Swear; and that he did not swear
Timothy to Preach the Word; and that *Timothy* did
not swear to him, that he would Preach the Word;
and that he did not swear the *Thessalonians* to read
his Epistle, p. 804.

And *S. Fisher* farther, 'As to *Paul's* own swearing,
' tho' I will not say (as *J. Ives* says some say) he did
' evil in swearing, (for he sware not) yet in swear-
' ing he had done evil, had he sworn in those many
' Expressions, wherein *H. D.* and *J. Ives* assert he did
' swear. And *S. Fisher* denies it, as well because un-
true, as because if he did, 'Then he had come under
' the guilt of Swearing commonly, ordinarily, fre-
' quently, or in his common Communication with
' the Saints; and in his Letters to them, uncalled
' to it by any Magistrate; which kind of Swearing,
' those two Sticklers for Oaths, in some Cases, do
' both confess, are by Christ condemned and for-
' bidden. So that the Apostle's clearness was long
ago asserted.

And tho' some would alledge, the Apostle did
not swear in those weighty solemn Asseverations,
because he us'd them in Religious Cases; but they
grant then, if he had used them upon Civil Oc-
casions

casions he had sworn, let them read *Gal. 1. 19, 20, 21.* and they may see he partly treats of Civil Affairs, viz. his Journeying, and his seeing no other of the Apostles, save *James* the Lord's Brother; and yet herein he uses the Name of the Lord, saying, *Behold, before God I lye not.*

S. Fisher also, in answer to *Bishop Gauden*, treating of these Expressions of *Christ* and *Paul*, saith, p. 70. 'And none of them, which (as occasion is) they are not as free to use, (not as imposed by Men, tying them at their Wills to any one of them, but as moved to any one of them, as the Lord gives utterance) as they are to use *Tea* and *Nay* it self: Yet tho' they say, *God is my Witness*, or any of the rest, they will not take it for an Oath before their Courts, but Fine and Prison, without there be a using of the fore-mention'd outward Rites.

Again, 'Thus among their Ministers at their Churches, and in their Books, *Verily, verily, God is my Witness, I call God to record, I speak the Truth before God, and lye not, I speak as in the Presence of God*, and such-like, are Oaths and forms of Swearing; but among the Magistrates, in their Courts, and at their Benches, (why else are the Quakers fined, and imprisoned, and confiscated, for not Swearing, tho' they can use them?) those and such like Forms of Speech, are not a Swearing.

Again, p. 91. speaking of the Bishop's mistaking of the Quakers Principle, *S. Fisher* says, 'Let your *Tea* be *Tea*, and your *Nay* *Nay*, lest ye fall into Condemnation, must be taken in such exclusive Latitude, or broad way of Command; howbeit, not indeed such an odd conceited kind of Universality of Command, as the Bishop fancies, as enjoyns to use no other Words in any Communication, by way of affirming or denying, but barely and only those Syllables of *Tea* and *Nay*; for the Quakers (as very Fools as the Bishop would make them) are not so silly, as to affect to use (as he fancies they do)

‘ those very Monasyllables, as if they fancy’d themselves verbally ty’d to them.

Again, ‘ Neither do the *Quakers* scruple to use such Paraphrases, or Enlargements of Speech, as the Matter, or the Party’s Understanding or Diffidence, may stand in need of; as, *God is Witness*, ‘ *We speak as in his Presence*, or the like.

And *Edw. Burroughs* says, p. 773. ‘ We Renounce all Foreign Authority, Power and Jurisdiction of the Pope, or any else, from having any Supremacy whatsoever, over the King, or any the good Subjects of *England*; and this we do declare, acknowledge and testifie, in the *Fear and Presence of God*.

Again, saith *E. Burroughs*, p. 774. ‘ We refuse to Swear in this case of Allegiance to the King, and in all other Cases whatsoever, and we cannot Swear at all; tho’ the Truth and Verity of all things, in all Causes, so far as known unto us, and as occasion requireth, we can acknowledge and testifie with *Yea and Nay*, as in the *Fear and Presence of God*, with true Intent.

Also *Thomas Ellwood*, in his Book *Truth prevailing*, p. 155. plainly declares, *To say barely and simply, God is my Witness, is no Oath*. See more at large in pag. 156, 157, 158, 159, 160, &c.

Likewise *Robert Barclay*, p. 553. says, ‘ That the using such manner of speaking are neither Oaths, nor so esteemed by our Adversaries; for when upon occasion, in matters of great moment, we have said, *We speak the Truth in the Fear of God, and before him, who is our Witness, and the Searcher of our Hearts*; adding such kind of serious Attestations, which we never refused in Matters of Consequence. Nevertheless an Oath hath moreover been required of us, with the Ceremony of putting our Hand upon the Book, and kissing it, the lifting up the Hand or Fingers, together with the common Form of Imprecation, *So help me God*; or, *So truly let the Lord God Almighty help me*. [Which Friends have generally denied.]

Again,

Again, p. 238. says *R. Barclay*, 'I do sincerely declare before God, who knows I speak the Truth, and Lye not, that I had not the least purpose to meddle with those Debates, &c.'

We next recite some part of what *G. Whitehead* says, in his *Case of the Quakers concerning Oaths*, defended as Evangelical, Anno 1675. on those words, *God knows I lye not, God is my Witness*; 'How can this be (*says he*) a Solemn Oath or Swearing, when he neither intends it, nor useth the Ceremony of an Oath, nor any Imprecation or Curse.

'For there is a plain difference between a Man's earnestly Appealing to God, by way of Imprecation, as the great Judge of Heaven and Earth, Avenger of Injury and Falshood; and tenderly Resigning his Cause unto God, that he may discover the Truth (being Witness thereof) to others, when it is or may be doubted or questioned: As in a Case of Moment, wherein I know and am sure, the Truth is on my side, while others may doubt or question me; if I appeal, commit, or resign my Cause to God (as knowing him to be my Witness therein) it is singly with a desire, that he may enlighten their Understandings, and bring them to know the Truth of my Cause.

Which manner of Arguing he uses in Reply to the Adversaries of Truth, that would needs have it, that those Apostolical Expressions were Oaths.

Neither was his Service in this Case only in defending Friends Principle of *Not Swearing*, but also of offering a Solemn Religious Declaration, as such, being no Oath, against the old open Opugners of Truth; but his Care and Concern hath likewise been against Apostates from the Truth---Who, to vilifie Friends, have joined with the Spirit of the aforesaid Adversaries, in accounting those Solemn Declarations aforesaid to be Oaths; which is thus Replied to, in his *Reflections on a Scandalous Pamphlet*, printed or promoted by *J. P.* Says *G. Whitehead*,

p. 7. 'The Remarker's Description of an Oath, reflects on the Apostle *Paul*, for Swearing, and using several Forms of Oaths, in his Epistle to the Churches of Christ; as if they were so incredulous, as not to believe his Christian Testimony, without using several Forms of Oaths, or without breaking Christ's Command, and his Apostle *James* his Exhortation against all Swearing, *Mat. 5. Jam. 5.* We'll rather believe the Apostles of Christ observed his Doctrine, Not to Swear, than that any, contrary thereunto, did Swear several Forms of Oaths; for God being Witness to every Testimony of Truth, tho' unsworn, I cannot apprehend, that simply declaring, either in the *Presence of God*, or that *God is Witness to the Truth declared*, can be either an Oath, or the Form of an Oath.

And in a Treatise of *W. Penn's*, call'd, *The great Case of Liberty of Conscience once more briefly Debated and Defended*, p. 48. The Author useth a solemn Declaration, after this manner, 'We take the Righteous Holy God to Record, against all Objections that are ignorantly or designedly raised against us, that we hold no Principle destructive of the *English Government*, that we plead for no such Dissenter.

Now we tenderly desire all to consider, what difference is there between the Name of *God* in such a Solemn Declaration, That Friends are Innocent under the Government; and the Solemn Declaration, with the Name of *God* in it, whereby we promise to remain so?

Also we observe *W. Penn*, in his Answer to the *Athenian Mercury*, mentioning the Apostles words, viz. *Rom. 9. 1. God is my Witness. 2 Cor. 11. 31. God knoweth I lye not. Gal. 1. 20. Before God I lye not.* *W. Penn* denying on our part any of these said Texts to be an Oath; and so therein concurring with Friends former and present Judgment in the Case.

So that you have a Continuation of Proofs, from Friends of great Eminency, that this hath been, without

out question, the Principle and Practice of Friends.

Whereby you may see, that Friends did offer their *Yea* and *Nay* in Opposition to *Swearing*; and not in Opposition to Friends *Solemnly Declaring*, in the Sight and Presence of God, and Before God, and in the Fear of God.

And as Friends have sometimes in Publick express'd themselves in the words *Yea* and *Nay*, so have they many times express'd themselves in other Words, and offer'd divers Solemn Reverential Expressions, as in the Presence of God, in his Sight, in his Fear, and God is Witness, &c. as is very manifest by the forecited Quotations: Yet they did never therein believe they exceeded *Christ's Command*, or *Yea* and *Nay*, or their own Testimony.

For farther plain Proof whereof, see *Friends Paper* to the Government, Intituled, *Truth seeks no Corners*, subscribed by *Ellis Hookes*, the 7th of the 3d Month, 1679. in the Name, and on the Behalf of the People called *Quakers*; in which is contained, a Protestation, or Declaration, to distinguish Protestant Dissenters from Popish Recusants, beginning thus; 'I A. B. do, in the Presence of Almighty God, Solemnly Profess, and in good Conscience declare, &c.

Which said Test had so good Acceptance, as that it was Reprinted, with some Reasons drawn up by Friends, in which they say, *lastly*, 'We do here humbly offer a Declaration, [being that before-mentioned] and pray, that it may be received as a Testimony of our good Affection to the Protestant Cause, and as our Assurance to live a sober peaceable Life, under the present Government; and in case any among us should be found false to our Declaration and Engagement, let such be punished as perjured Persons.

See also another Paper printed to the Government, 1680. of like import, which begins thus: 'I A. B. do Solemnly, in the Presence of God, and in my Conscience profess, testify and declare, That

‘ That I do not believe the Church of *Rome*, or
 ‘ Papal Church, is the true Church, out of which
 ‘ there is no Salvation, &c.

And again, Friends say in the same Paper, ‘ And
 ‘ I do truly and sincerely profess, and in good Con-
 ‘ science declare, That I believe King *Charles* the Se-
 ‘ cond is Lawful and Rightful King of this Realm,
 ‘ and all other his Dominions and Countries.

And again, in the same Paper, ‘ And I do So-
 ‘ lemnly, in the *Presence of God*, testify and de-
 ‘ clare, That I make this Declaration, and every
 ‘ part thereof, in the plain and ordinary Sense of
 ‘ the Words read unto me, &c.

Which said Paper was most of it Reprinted by
 Friends in *Anno* 1688. To which Friends added,

‘ I *A. B.* do promise, by the Assistance of the Grace
 ‘ of God, to be true and faithful to King *William*
 ‘ and Queen *Mary*, &c.

And since the Government hath by Law allow’d
 us to worship God in his own way, Solemnly to pro-
 mise our Fidelity, and to declare the Truth in sever-
 al Cases, instead of Swearing it; which formerly
 could not be obtained from the several Powers, of
 whom ’twas desired, as in the forecited Solemn De-
 clarations offer’d by Friends, is largely set forth:

We hope that none now will be so Uncharitable,
 as to conclude, we do these things (*viz.* either Wor-
 ship, Promise, or give Evidence) meerly formally,
 and at the Will of Man, but in good Conscience to
 that God, that has inclined Man to favour us in
 these things.

Thus, dear Friend, we have shewed you the Sense
 of our Ancient Friends,

George Fox,
Richard Farnsworth,
Richard Hubbertorn,
Edward Burroughs,
William Smith,
Isaac Pennington,

Francis Howgill,
Samuel Fisher,
Thomas Ellwood,
Robert Barclay,
William Penn,
George Whitehead,
 Besides

Besides which, many more Instances might be Collected, both out of their, and several other Friends Books, to the same effect, which for Brevity's sake is omitted.

As also that in the Yearly Meeting, 1692. where Friends (of the Meeting for Sufferings) Care was desired to be continued for the Relief of Friends from the Burthen of Oaths, as the Lord did open away, and give Opportunity for the same; whose Care was commended, and also desired to be continued in the Yearly Meeting, 1693. as the Lord should please to make way for the general Ease of Friends.

By which, Friends, you may see that it was consistent with our Testimony to speak in the Fear, in the Sight, or in the Presence of God, who is Witness, or before God; and tho' by our aforesaid Adversaries, 'twas asserted, That those Solemn Affirmations were Oaths, that the Apostle Swore, and that Friends might Swear; yet the aforesaid Faithful Friends, severally as they were concerned, opposed them therein; and affirmed, those Solemn Affirmations are no Oaths; that the Apostle did not Swear in using such Expressions; and that Friends might Reverently use such Expressions without Swearing; both when we promise to be True and Faithful to the Government, and in other Civil Affairs, when Lawfully called thereto.

And dear Friends, how sweet will it be, to have Truth sincerely declared before Magistrates, in the Presence of Almighty God, who is Witness of the Truth of what Friends say, as they speak in his Holy Dread and Fear! In this therefore our Desire is you may all be found.

That whensoever any of you shall be called thereto, you may speak in the Sense thereof, so as to Convince the World, that Gospel Witness-bearing doth exceed Legal Swearing.

Oh,

Oh, let all now be thankful, that the Lord hath so tender'd the Hearts of many in Authority; and the good Part hath so prevailed in them, as to subject their Wills, so far to Friends Entreaties; and in some measure grant us now by Law, what Friends have offered to other Governments, and could never be accepted.

Let none therefore count or call this a subjecting our Testimony to the Will of Man, seeing God hath so far subjected Man's Will to our Christian Desire.

And none need question, but as they abide in the Fear of the Lord, they will be preserved sensible of his Presence; and so not be found in a Form of Godliness, without the Life.

Whenever Friends formerly offer'd to speak in the Presence of God, Friends did not doubt but they should be free and capable so to speak, if that Government had accepted their said offer.

And seeing 'tis now granted by the Government, we hope none will distrust the Lord's Assistance therein, now, any more than formerly, or any more than in waiting upon him in Meetings, since it has been permitted by Men so to do.

*Signed in behalf of the Meeting for
Sufferings in London, the 1st of
the 3d Month, 1696. By*

Benjamin Bealing.

Reprinted and Sold by Philip Gwillim in Austin-
Fryars, near the Royal Exchange, London. 1713.